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AMERICAN BRANT MAKING A COMEBACK IN EASTERN FLYWAY

The American brant, which was almost extinct in 1947, is now gaining in numbers, Dr. Clarence Cottam, acting director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, reported today.

Recent figures show that the brant has increased to the point that the population is now only 41% below that of 1946 - the last "normal" year for the birds. Practically all the Atlantic American brant in existence spent all of last winter on tidal bays along the coast of New Jersey.

"Sixty-seven percent of the American brant disappeared suddenly in 1947," declared Dr. Cottam. "Although we don't know all the details, we know that few young were produced that year. We also believe that this loss could be due to severe weather conditions somewhere along the flyway. The brant is a gregarious bird, and most of them stay in one big flock when the population is down. Therefore, they all meet the same weather and hunting conditions."

Ordinarily, the American brant prefers the New Jersey area, according to Dr. Cottam, and, when that area reaches the saturation point, some of the flock spreads southward to Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. Last winter in North Carolina, for instance, there were but 2 percent of the number that were there in 1946.

Because of the fall in population, a closed season was put on American brant in 1947 in the Eastern flyway, and is still in effect. Even though American brant seem numerous to some observers, this is purely a local "abundance," Dr. Cottam said, and an open hunting season this year cannot be announced for the birds.

The black brant, on the Pacific coast, is only slightly different from the American brant in the Atlantic flyway -- but while both species nest in the Arctic the two populations are completely separated and use different breeding grounds. There is no closed season on brant in the Pacific flyway.

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